

**Town of Arlington  
Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)**

Tuesday, February 24, 2004 7:15 PM

Committee members present: Elisabeth Carr-Jones, Ralph Elwell, Larry Englisher, Jeff Maxtutis, Lt. Jim McHugh, Kevin O'Brien, John Sanchez, Scott Smith, Ed Starr, David Walkinshaw

**1. The minutes of 1/27/2004 were approved unanimously.**

**2. Symmes Development and Transportation**

Elisabeth Carr-Jones reported that E.A. Fish has partnered with Howard Stein Hudson to deal with transportation issues relating to the Symmes development. They appear to be taking these issues seriously. Items of note include

- Coordination of the Hospital Road / Summer Street intersection with the Brattle Street / Summer Street intersection. The latter intersection is part of the Summer Street reconstruction project. The consultants are planning to meet with Ron Santosuosso and representatives from MassHighway.
- Bike improvements along Summer Street

Some residents are concerned about access from Woodside Lane. One resident is asking about specific guidelines for street closures, and is concerned about traffic monitoring and management of traffic during construction. The current approach is to make sure that the Hospital Road access works as the primary access.

Scott Smith suggested developing criteria for road closures that may be applied anywhere. Jeff Maxtutis asked about our review role as design progresses. According to Kevin O'Brien, TAC does not have an official role, but the Redevelopment Board will probably seek our help.

Elisabeth announced that there will be a public meeting at 7 PM on Thursday 2/26 at Symmes.

**3. Right Turn on Red (RTOR)**

Proposed guidelines (Appendix A) were presented. John Sanchez asked about the Town's liability for taking down the restrictive signs (should a crash occur after the removal of the sign). Ed Starr offered to speak with John Maher. Scott Smith noted that in most of the U.S., the default seems to be that no-turn-on-red signs are not installed. He also suggested that the guidelines could be used to develop a rough ranking, so that no-turn-on-red signs would first be removed at those intersections where conditions are most favorable for permitting RTOR.

The committee voted unanimously to adopt the proposed guidelines as a starting point.

**4. Updated Decision Criteria**

The updated decision criteria (Appendix B) were approved unanimously.

**5. Mass. Ave. Corridor East Arlington**

Scott Smith reported that we expect the RFP to go out this week, with responses due back on 3/23/2004. Proposed companies to receive it include

- Howard Stein Hudson
- BSC Group
- Walkable Communities
- possibly Cecil Group

Committee members suggested adding Fitzgerald – Halliday and VHB to the list.

Ed Starr reported that Michael Rademacher (a member of TAC) had expressed an interest on behalf of his firm. Ed recommended to Mike that he seek advice on the possible conflict of interest issue from Town Counsel.

## **6. Downing Square**

Elisabeth Carr-Jones reported that a sizable working group has formed, including Lt McHugh, Ron Santosuosso, Ralph Elwell, Mike Rademacher, Jeff Edgers, Susan Harter and Margaret Potter. Given the various ways that crashes at this intersection have been reported, there may have been more crashes here than previously reported. Another issue that needs to be put on the table is the possibility of a sidewalk on the east side of the Park Avenue bridge.

## **7. Hutchinson Road**

Larry Englisher presented the draft letter to the Board of Selectmen, containing the recommendations (speed limit enforcement and pruning of vegetation) that were previously voted by TAC. One item under consideration is a sign warning motorists that there may be pedestrians in the street. Scott Smith offered to consult with the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) peer-to-peer service to find out what the appropriate signage would be.

The TAC voted approval of the Hutchinson Road recommendations pending a review of the full report. Larry Englisher will send the full report to TAC members via e-mail, and if there were difficulties to respond within the week. The full report had been provided at the previous TAC meeting.

## **8. Jason Street**

David Walkinshaw reported speaking with Bob McKersie. Complaints include the Norfolk Street crosswalk (which was never recommended by TAC), and cars sliding into the granite curbing at Jason and Spring. He noted that TAC had recommended asphalt curbing to start, so that the design could be inexpensively fine-tuned.

A larger question is when we should consider an issue to be closed. Some residents may not be satisfied with the solution, and may come back again and again even though the situation on the street hasn't changed.

Elisabeth Carr-Jones suggested that we might need to go back and look at all the big cut-throughs with an eye towards inexpensive traffic calming measures. Jeff Maxtutis noted that traffic calming would have to be done as a program, and is sometimes not popular among the abutters.

Scott Smith suggested that this is another reason to have clear criteria for street closures.

## **9. Crosswalk Working Group**

John Sanchez reported that there would be \$8,000 in the budget for thermoplastic. The crosswalk

working group had agreed that

- Initial locations will include the **unsignalized** crosswalks on Mass. Ave, Gray and Quincy, and the two major bikeway crossings (Mill and Lake Streets)
- Crosswalk width of 10' (the bikeway crossings may need to be 12' to match the width of the bikeway)

There was some discussion of the crosswalk at Mass. Ave and Tufts (which is located only one block from a signalized intersection). Since this crosswalk is likely to be moved towards Harlow Street at a future date, it was agreed that this one crosswalk would be done in paint.

#### **10. Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Process**

There is an item in the TIP that appears to be related to the Mass. Ave. corridor. It contains some inaccurate information, and we are unsure how it was put in the TIP. John Sanchez offered to follow up with Rich Bento, and Kevin O'Brien with the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS). It was agreed that the TIP item should be updated to reflect Arlington's current needs.

#### **11. Pace Car**

Ralph Elwell will meet with Elisabeth Carr Jones to see about next steps.

#### **12. Alternative Transportation Fair**

Scott Smith reported that the day is set for Sunday 5/16, at the Recreation Center. Events will include the annual Bike Arlington tour, a walking tour, a bike rodeo and exhibits. Kevin Greeley is working on funding options, but if he is unable to secure funding, plans B and C might involve ABAC and/or TAC funds.

Jim McHugh suggested that for future years, we try to coordinate it with the annual Police Department bike safety day. We attempted such coordination for this year, but schedules did not cooperate.

#### **13. Tufts Engineering Students**

Ideas include the possibility of priority bus lanes at Alewife, moving the bike path through Arlington Center, and the Park Avenue bridge.

#### **14. Current projects and other updates**

- a. Mass Ave / Route 60. This is going slowly due to delays in understanding the capabilities of the signals. Target is to discuss with the Redevelopment Board in April.
- b. Summer Street. John Sanchez reported that the low bid of \$4.3 million was considerably higher than the estimate of \$3.8 million. This is an issue for Mass Highway to deal with, but it may delay the project.
- c. The street lighting contract should be let by the end of March.

**The meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM**

**Handouts:**

Agenda package including agenda, draft RTOR guidelines, draft decision criteria, outline of crosswalk guidelines, MPO spreadsheet on Mass. Ave corridor, list of potential projects with Tufts engineering students, active/planned TAC projects, status of actions – from Ed Starr

TAC Members booklet – from Ed Starr

Minutes from 1/2004 – from Scott Smith

Draft letter to Board of Selectmen on Hutchinson Road – from Larry Englisher

Symmes Redevelopment Associates (Fish) Proposal Overview and Site Plan – from Elisabeth Carr-Jones

“Safety Analysis of Marked vs. Unmarked Crosswalks,” from 1/2004 ITE Journal, and excerpt from MUTCD on RTOR – from Jeff Maxtutis

## **Appendix A: Guidelines for the Removal of Existing No Turn on Red Signs in Arlington**

### **Purpose:**

Many signalized intersections in Arlington are currently posted as No Turn on Red. Although unwarranted Right Turn on Red (RTOR) restrictions significantly impact driver mobility, this must be balanced against pedestrian and driver safety, an even higher priority. The following are recommended guidelines for the possible removal of existing No Turn on Red signs.

### **Guidelines:**

#### **A. Safety for Drivers**

1. RTOR should be prohibited where insufficient visibility exists for drivers to see approaching traffic and pedestrians crossing, from both sides.  
[COMMENT: if there may be parked cars on the approach that would obstruct visibility, assuring adequate visibility may mean several car lengths of parking restriction. If we are not willing to do that, leave the no-turn-on-red sign in place. A tough visibility situation for approaching cross traffic makes it less likely that motorists will adequately scan for pedestrians.]
2. RTOR should be prohibited when geometric or operational characteristics of the intersection would result in unexpected conflicts.
3. If, after allowing RTOR, 3 or more crashes occur within a year that could be partially attributed to RTOR, RTOR should be prohibited.

#### **B. Safety for pedestrians**

1. RTOR creates an additional hazard for pedestrians. Drivers making a right-turn-on-red are expected to both check for gaps in traffic approaching from the left, and for pedestrians crossing from both sides. This is a difficult task at a busy intersection. Therefore:
  - a. Do not allow RTOR where high pedestrian and traffic volumes are present.
  - b. If the intersection has moderate use by children, older pedestrians or persons with disabilities, be conservative about allowing RTOR.

#### **C. Equity**

1. These guidelines should be consistently applied Town-wide.

#### **D. Quality of Life**

1. In some cases, the RTOR restrictions serve to discourage cut-through traffic on neighborhood streets. For example, one impact of removing the NO-TURN-ON-RED sign at Brooks and Lake would be to encourage more cut-through traffic on Brooks and Orvis. Here the quality of life for the neighborhood would be a significant consideration.

## **Appendix B: Decision Criteria**

### **Safety**

Most important. Includes all forms of accidents. In general, vehicle/pedestrian accidents are more deadly and therefore have the highest priority. Sensitivity is needed to the special needs of children, seniors, and persons with disabilities. Further, any proposed changes should not hinder effective movement of emergency service organizations such as police, fire, and emergency medical.

### **Mobility**

Both people and goods must be able to move around and through the town with reasonable efficiency. Mobility includes all forms of transportation: passenger vehicles, trucks, pedestrians, public transportation, and bicycles.

### **Equity**

All must be treated equally given equal conditions. If we recommend a change that moves traffic from one area to other areas, does the overall net benefit to Arlington justify doing this? If so, are there things that should be done to help the impacted areas? Further, if we recommend something (such as new stop signs) for one neighborhood, are we prepared to do the same thing for all neighborhoods facing a similar situation? This leads to a related criterion, PRECEDENCE: Is an action consistent with previous actions?

### **Environment and Public Health**

The overall goal is to improve the quality of life in Arlington. Negative impacts of transportation include air pollution, congestion, crashes, road damage, and noise/vibration. On the other hand, some forms of transportation, such as walking and bicycling, can have a positive impact on public health. Policies should consider these external impacts of transportation, for example, by encouraging use of modes that have less negative impact than the single occupant auto.

### **Priority**

Given the large number of transportation issues that Arlington is facing, we will need to encourage the Town to work on the high priority issues with a reasonable chance of a successful outcome. Priority can be assessed from the criteria above. Is this a critical issue for Arlington? Is there enough public support to ensure a successful implementation? Every recommended action has both a direct cost and an opportunity cost; if we ask that substantial Town resources be applied for one transportation problem, it means another Town problem will, necessarily, receive a lower priority.